1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

(December-January) or in Mah (January-February); if the clan celebrates the festival later (the Jate clan of Mohnar in Mangnar *pargana*, for example, with its brother clans the Tokalor and the Hukur of Erpanar, celebrates it on the full moon day of Chait (March-April)), the men return to their houses and are free to resume marital relations as soon as the last grain has been winnowed, when the *pen-wadda'i* or clan-priest of the village where the clan-god is kept offers an egg before him, and in the subordinate villages of the clan which have no separate clan-god of their own the *kasyeq-gaita* offers an egg before the Village Mother. In some tracts where the New Urad-Koqsar festival is late there is a separate New Kosra festival in Pusi (December-January), and this appears there to be the signal for the ending of this taboo (*polo*). For it is not only sexual relations and sleeping in the village that are taboo in this period; but also such activities as the cutting of bamboos and grass, which obviously cannot be postponed so late as Phagur and Chait.

While the taboo lasts, and the men live in the fields, the women sleep in the village, and arrive in the fields at sunrise, bringing the day's food already cooked. The men, before starting their day's work, have a substantial meal of *gato* (Hindi, *bhat*) or thick porridge of mixed hill grains, spiced with the various pulses, roselle and other forest fruits and vegetables, salted, and improved by flesh, if available, of field mice, hares or birds. At about 10 a.m. and again at 2 p.m. they expect to have *jawa* (Hindi, *pej*) or thin gruel consisting of the water in which their *gato* has been boiled. They have a final meal of *gato* at sunset, which the women cook in the fields and give their men to eat there, taking back their own share to eat in the village. Cooking pots are kept generally in the *ketul*. At harvest, to save time and enable the women to get to work earlier, the morning meals also are cooked in the fields. On the last day before a woman is due for the seclusion of the menstruation room or hut, she brings food sufficient to last her menfolk that day and the next five.

Harvest

No ceremony precedes reaping. Men, women and children reap, using small iron sickles of the type common throughout the Central Provinces. I have not seen the reaping of the early grains. The *penda* fields in early December are an untidy sight; the various grains and pulses are sown higgledy-piggledy all over the area, and no attempt is made to keep different crops separate. Reaping is therefore an eclectic and slow performance, especially of such grains as *kang* and *bajra*, little of which are sown, and which have, therefore, to be searched for in the welter of other crops. *Sem* and other pulses riot over the poles planted in

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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important, for then the *kasyeq-gaita* and, in a minor degree, the secular headman have their hour of glory, and something of the honour that might be paid to real chieftains. The *kasyeq-gaita* as intermediary between the Village Mother and her children sacrifices to her a pig and a cock, and sets before her a basket of new *kuthi*, pulses and beans. A feast similar to that before the clan-god follows. Then the *kasyeq-gaita* proceeds to his *udam-garia* or seat-of-honour, next to which may be a smaller seat for the secular headman (*gaita* or *peda*); it is either a long, flat boulder, or a flat stone supported on stone legs, as in Plate XXIII. He wears no insignia, and is to all appearance as naked and poor a Maria as all his villagers. The men seat themselves around in a circle on little stone cromlechs. Then the *kasyeq-gaita* formally announces the programme for the next year, what *penda* slope is to be cultivated, what arrangements are to be made to meet State or zamindari demands for land revenue or labour, and so on; the announcements, it is true, are the results of previous informal village discussions, and not the *kasyeq-gaita's* orders independently conceived by him, but his formal promulgation is needed before they can be brought into effect.

After *Koqsar* they are free to cut grass and bamboos, and to collect forest produce, or to hunt; it is true that in most villages there is little game but hares and field-mice, but a Maria thinks a field-mouse the rarest of delicacies, and will stop any occupation to chase a mouse or dig them out.[1] But the long year is over at last, and till the next sowing, though there is ahead the labour of felling, spreading and firing the wood for the *penda*, taboos are lifted, and there is no fear of harm to growing things from the queer magic inherent in sex. So now is the season of new marriages and of conjugal life in the home, and the seed is sown for the raising of the human crop.

Assessment and payment of land revenue among the Hill Marias

It has been indicated that there are the beginnings of permanent cultivation among the Hill Marias. As a matter of fact, several villages have traces of old rice embanked fields. Two things long effectively checked the spread of permanent cultivation. One, before the 1910 rebellion, was the presence of a police station at Kutul, the headquarter village of the Bardal clan and *pargana* in the very heart of the Abujhmar hills. This meant a constant demand from the Kutul police for rice as *bisaha*,[2] and

[1] I had a carefully arranged beat for a family of man-eating tigers at Kutru ruined because the Hill Maria beaters rushed in wild enthusiasm to catch two or three mice disturbed by the beat.

[2] See p. 14 above.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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CHAPTER VIII

PROCURING OF OTHER FOOD AND DRINK

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'Whatever came across them they must needs kill and eat it;
They made no distinction. If they saw a jackal they killed
And ate it; no distinction was observed; they respected not antelope, sambhar and the like.
They made no distinction in eating a sow, a quail, a pigeon,
A crow, a kite, an adjutant, a vulture,
A lizard, a frog, a beetle, a cow, a calf, a he- and a she-buffalo,
Rats, bandicoots, squirrels—all these they killed and ate.
So began the Gonds to do. They devoured raw and ripe things.'
(Hislop's version of the Lingo epic of the Gonds.)

A. Food Gathering

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262 ●

FAMINE has never been a problem in Bastar, as the Marias and other tribes have always been able to draw half of their food supplies from the innumerable edible products of the vast forests. The difficulty is not so much to say what they collect and eat as what they do not; in fact, if one were to take one of the lists of trees, shrubs and herbs compiled by the Central Provinces Forest Department, and copy from it the names of all edible forest products, one would not even then produce an exhaustive list. At page 124 above, many of the more important forest products collected and garnered were enumerated. *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) is not common in the Abujhmar hills, where consequently little *mahua* spirit is distilled or drunk; where it does occur, the Hill Marias collect its flowers and fruit as eagerly as cultivators throughout India. It is common in the Bison-horn country. The women and children gather the fallen flowers in the mornings. It is dried in the sun, and then stored in bamboo wicker baskets; it keeps a long time. It is used to flavour *poj* and *gato*, or roasted. Oil is pressed in the plains from the fruit. Tamarind trees are not really wild, but were originally planted around village sites; the fruit is carefully gathered from all the unoccupied village sites. The fruits of the *achar* (*Buchanania latifolia*) and *tendu* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) are two of the main sources of food supply. They collect also fruit of the *seona* (*Gmelina arborea*), *jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*) and *aonla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*). Wild mangoes are common, and they are learning to cultivate the tree; they store whole fruit, dried pulp, and kernels whole or crushed. In the south of the State the toddy palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) is the mainstay of the economic life of the people, but

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1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
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it is not much used among Bison-horn and Hill Marias in comparison to the *salphi* or sago palm (*Caryota urens*; Maria, *garga marra*) which is found wild and is extensively propagated. When the *salphi*, after much cutting of the spadix for the intoxicating sap, ceases to flower, the interior of the stem yields a fibrous pith. This the Hill Maria women (probably the Bison-horn also) pound on a large flat stone with a heavy oval pebble held in their right hand, to separate pith from fibre. The resultant pith 'grain' looks like lime, and is steamed into cakes; an earthenware pot has a little water poured into it, and over the water bamboo sticks are criss-crossed and covered with *siari* leaves as a platform for the pith to be steamed; no salt or sugar is added.

Actually most of the fruit already mentioned is collected by women and children; the men, of course, deal with the toddy and sago palm sap, and their methods will be described in the section on drinking and intoxicants. The men collect those forest products which they need for basketry or rope making, or in finding which there is an element of the chase. They like to roam about with their bows and arrows while their women are busy gathering fruit.

The women gather also various leaves, flowers and seeds as vegetables. They use the young green leaves and the seeds of the sal (*Shorea robusta*); the flowers of the *giril marra* shrub (*Indigofera arborea*); the young curled fronds of bracken in the Abujhmar hills, possibly also on the Bailadila mountains, where, too, it is common (the Hill Marias call it *handa jabba* and the Bison-horn *anda koser*); the seeds of the marking nut tree (*Semecarpus anacardium*; *bhelwa*); the young green shoots, pith and seeds of the bamboo; the fruits of the *ber* (*Zizyphus jujuba*). The digging of forest roots and yams in the rains is one of the women's chief occupations; there are many varieties, and some are now cultivated. In the early rains a much sought after foods are the *khudrati* or *bora* fungus, and the mushroom. Various wild plants are gathered as vegetables from marsh and river valley, especially the *chiur*, the long thin leaves of which are like small hyacinth leaves, and are a favourite food of wild buffalo and bison. Women and men collect large supplies of *siari* or elephant creeper leaves for use as plates and drinking vessels. *Aki* is the Gondi word for a leaf, and the assonance *aking-waking* is commonly used as covering all produce which the Maria collects from the forest.

In August and September the Bison-horn Maria women spend hours swishing a basket[1] over the tops of certain wild grasses in the fields to collect the seeds, which are eaten like the small hill grains.

[1] Hill Maria women also do this, using little wicker-work shields fastened to bamboo sticks to beat the grass seeds into a basket.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

A little later they collect *kapani*, the wild bearded rice common in all old rice fields and fallows and at the edges of standing water, by holding a winnowing-fan in one hand and beating the grain of the standing ripe plants into it with the other; the bearded ears are sometimes plaited into '*sela*' fringes for ornamenting doors of houses at the new-eating festivals.

The men are adept in collecting the honey of various kinds of bees, though sometimes, despite forest rules, too prone to save trouble by felling rather than climbing a fine tree. For this purpose, and for tapping palm trees, they often fasten to the trunks of trees long thick bamboos, cutting the side shoots down to stumps four or five inches long to serve as ladder rungs. Gums are collected from many species of trees, for use as bird-lime or in securing the *kosa* silk whipping of arrow-heads, etc. In Dantewara and Bijapur tahsils the Forest Department has quantities of *tasar* silk cocoons collected by Bison-horn Maria men when, in the rains in the intervals between sowing and reaping their various crops, they go out to the forests in search of such delicacies as red ants' nests, ant-eaters, rats, squirrels and grubs. The cocoons are high on sal or *saja* trees; where the climbers cannot reach them they use long bamboo poles with a piece of bamboo fastened at an acute angle at the end to serve as a hook. They get about Rs. 3 a thousand cocoons from the Koshta weavers who employ them; the Hill Maria, however, generally collects only what cocoons he needs for his own purposes. Red ants' nests are cooked, leaves, ants and all, either with *pej* or *gato*, or by themselves and eaten with pulses as a vegetable. They are also a favourite febrifuge; a rough and ready remedy is to shake out the live red ants on to the patient's skull, when the formic acid of their stings is said to reduce the fever; the more elaborate method is to boil the nest, ants and all, and to strain off and use the juice as a febrifuge in small doses; this juice is said to taste sharper than any lime and believed to be invaluable for a long-standing fever. In collecting the palms of the dwarf palms *chhind* (*Phoenix sylvestris*), *P. acaulis*, and *buta chhind* (*P. farinifera*) for use for thatching, basketry or making rough cords for binding fences, the men not only collect the small dates or the flowers (according to season) and the edible pith of the *buta chhind*, but also the fat white grub of a certain beetle, which is also found in the stems of the toddy palm and in fresh green monsoon bamboo shoots. This is eaten fried in ghee or oil with a little spice and chillies, and is regarded as a great delicacy; it is sold in the Jagdalpur market for three or four pice, and even high-caste Hindus buy it. When white ants emerge in flying swarms early in the monsoon they collect them after they have shed their wings, or pull the wings

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the seeds are small, shiny and scarlet, with black eyes, and are used as beads in Bastar and many parts of the Central Provinces. For poisoning tiger they 'salt' the flesh of a kill with the poisonous leaves, bark and roots of the shrub *dual bilo* (Halbi *bag mohra*; *Alstonia neriifolia*) mixed with quicklime.

C. *Domestication of Animals*

Pork is a major item in the dietary of Hill and Bison-horn Marias. At the end of marches in the Abujhmar hills I always paid for a pig for the carriers from the preceding camp to roast and eat before dispersing to their villages; and it is sound to provide the Marias or Murias called out for any State work with pork at the beginning and end of the work. The best fattened hog[1] is very cheap and goes a long way. The housing and feeding of pigs have already been described[2]; cared for in this way, even the domestic India pig is not necessarily the foul worm-ridden pest that he becomes in the low caste quarters of the towns and villages of British India, and in fact in Abujhmar villages his quarters are often cleaner than the houses.

Pigs

Nearly all young boars are gelded, but a few are left entire for sacrifices in honour of the clan-god and the Village Mother to whom neither Hill nor Bison-horn Maria would offer a hog. The Hill Maria lays the boar on its back, ties its front legs to a post, and stretches out its back legs, while another draws out its penis (*dim*) and crushes its testicles (*merrsheng*) with stones. They say that gelding improves the flavour of pork, and the only boars ever eaten are those sacrificed. A hog is always part of the Hill Maria bride-price. Hill Marias call a hog *badiali padi* or *kuna padi*, and Bison-horn *badiali padi*; boars they respectively call *charhal padi* and *kural padi*.

Cooked pig's lard is kept in many Hill Maria houses as a salve for sore eyes and cuts.

They keep numbers of poultry similar in breed and appearance to the red jungle fowl. The Hill Maria's hen-coops have been described on page 104. Cocks and hens are taken to the field houses, and roost there below the sleeping platforms. *Korr-guda*, funnel-shaped nests on bamboo posts about two feet high, are kept in every Hill Maria house, and by many Bison-horn Marias. Jungle cock visit the *penda* plots and fight the domestic cocks in the early morning; the Hill Marias say that if a jungle cock crosses a domestic hen the eggs are not fertile.

Poultry

[1] 'Hog' is used in its technical sense, of a gelded boar.
[2] See pp. 103 and 120.

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Their interest in these household occupations may be seen in scores of homely riddles, which describe them in vivid symbol. 883

> Drumming, drumming, what is that drum?
> At cock-crow she is drumming.

A motiari is expected to be back from the ghotul by dawn and should be busy husking grain before her parents are awake.

A broom is 'the thing that licks quickly and then falls flat'; a leaf-plate is 'the little tank full of thorns' or 'the boy that morning and evening gives a share to all'; a pot of curds hawked round the village is described as 'the white cock going from house to house'.

But the main interest of chelik and motiari—for after all they are still only boys and girls—is in food. *'Bhaio bihân handiya ma dhyân.* As soon as morning comes, his mind is in the cooking-pot.' Of things to eat the Muria have a considerable variety, much more than would be available to people of similar economic status in a town. All the rich and varied produce of the great Bastar jungles is open to them; the State has not yet interfered with their right to natural roots, fruit and leaves—they may take what they want so long as they do no damage. 262

As Grigson says of the Maria: 'The difficulty is not so much to say what they collect and eat as what they do not; in fact, if one were to take one of the lists of trees, shrubs and herbs compiled by the Central Provinces Forest Department and copy from it the names of all edible forest products, one would not even then produce an exhaustive list.'[1] I do not propose to give such a list here; but I will briefly mention the things that chelik and motiari like best. Meat and fish probably stand first in popularity—I will describe them later.

Fig. 5. Uspal rice husker. Length 5'9"

Among fruit trees, the mahua is supreme. When the flowers begin to fall, the cattle are kept tied up until the women and children have gathered them. They spread them in bright yellow patches swiftly turning brown on rocks, before their houses, in specially-made enclosures. When dry enough, the flowers are beaten with heavy sticks, sometimes with the wooden doors of a pigsty. The pulp is made into chutney with dried khamer fruit and tamarind kernels, and eaten with rice or gruel. The oil is used for cooking and lighting. The flowers are stored in baskets, and make one of the most eagerly demanded gifts when the chelik make a dance tour of a village. 262 252 222 [373]

Another popular fruit is, of course, the mango. The motiari fetch baskets of wild mangoes from the forest where the trees grow in profusion, cut them up in the ghotul and give them with chilli and salt to the chelik. 262 222 [563]

Aonra fruit is liked, and there are many riddles about it. 'A green pigeon came from Porrobhum and laid its eggs on a leaf.' 'The white bird hides its eggs under its wings.' Other popular fruits are those of the thorny bhoir—'Mother bites, but daughter invites'; the kurlu—'The little sparrow's liver is sweet'; the sinna, the char, the jamun and the tamarind. Tendu fruit is picked while still unripe and put in kodon chaff to mature. Sometimes it is buried in the ground and a fire is lit above it. When ripe, it is eaten raw. [524] [251] Wild figs are eaten ripe or dried and ground up with flour.

[1] Grigson, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

3

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

262 222 252 [278] The children, as well as older people, kill and eat frogs when they can. In the rains they creep up to any small pond and with their sticks kill the frogs before they are able to escape into the water. They remove the skin and stomach and roast the rest. Many people, however, only eat the hind legs, regarding the rest as dangerous. Frog's flesh is believed to be a useful remedy for swollen glands.[1] Various kinds of lizards are eaten the same way. In most of the less sophisticated villages red ants are valued both for food and as a febrifuge. A party of chelik go through the forest until they see the ants' nests high up in the branches of a tree. Then one of them climbs up and breaks off or cuts all the branches on which the nests are and throws them to the ground. The others quickly prepare leaf-cups and one of them plunges his hands into the nests and fills the cups with the ants and their eggs. They brush off the eggs and tie up the ants in the cups. They bring the little bundles home and put them straight into the fire. When they have been roasted for some minutes they remove the cups, open them and squeeze the ants into a paste. They add salt and chilli and put the mixture back into the fire to bake. This chutney, which is very tasty, with a sharp clean taste, is generally eaten with liquor. At the beginning of the rains the Muria also catch the flying white ants, pull off their wings and fry the bodies.[2]

Other delicacies are the grubs which are found in the date-palm. These large white grubs are sought after by many others beside the Muria, and are bought even by high-caste Hindus in the bazaars for as much as two pice apiece. They are fried and eaten and sometimes oil is extracted from them.

262 276 524 The Muria also enjoy catching and eating the river crab, 'the blacksmith that takes his pincers and hammer about with him', 'the Raja who has hands and feet but lacks a head'.[3] Shrimps and prawns are common in the streams; a prawn is described as 'the boy with eight feet, twelve shoulders and sixteen horns'.

262 Most of these delicacies, fried with a little chilli, are used as 'savouries' when the people go to drink salphi juice or other liquor. Men and boys going in the evening towards the sago-palms may be seen carrying little leaf-bundles containing fried frogs, grubs and a chutney of red ants. These relieve the sweetness of the salphi juice and the unpleasant taste of the mahua spirit.

262 843 Beef is still eaten in all parts of Bastar, even by the sophisticated Raja Muria who are so loud in their protests that they have abandoned it. An interesting story connects the practice with the *dohada* cravings of pregnancy. The Muria theory, which is the old Hindu theory, is that it is the child in the womb who is responsible for the mother's irrational desires. 'A Brahmin woman six months pregnant had a craving for beef and went to a Ganda to get some. For fear of the husband he refused, but his wife gave her two

[171] [1] Crooks has an interesting note on frog-eating. The Musahar of Mirzapur, he says, eat two kinds, a small and a large, at marriages. 'The Burmese certainly eat them and boiled frogs are said to be exposed for sale in their bazaars. I hear that the Burmese prisoners in the Benares jail have been caught eating them alive. Mr Bower tells me that he knows of Saises in Oudh fattening frogs for food in earthen jars.'—*N.I. Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, p. 78.

[171] [2] In South India ants are believed to be a tonic; there is a Tamil proverb that 'If you eat a thousand ants, you will get the strength of an elephant'. A paste made with ants is recorded as being used with curry in Kanara. Winged termites are widely eaten, and sometimes their bodies are sun-dried and stored. The queen termite is considered a special delicacy, fried or raw; Tamil athletes are said to keep themselves in trim by swallowing it raw and then sprinting a couple of miles. See S. T. Moses, 'Ants and Folk-Beliefs in South India', *Man in India*, Vol. VIII, pp. 10ff.

[278] [3] The viscous substance adhering to the carapace of a crab is believed to be good for ear-ache.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

small pieces. When the Brahmin discovered it, he killed his wife and ripped open her belly in order to remove the meat and thus save her from a worse fate after death. But he found the child with one bit of beef in its mouth and the other in its hand: it cried, "It was not my mother who wanted it, but I myself" and so died.'

This story is popular and widespread. It is said that in olden days, the Maria and Muria regarded beef as taboo. But a Maria woman, like the Brahmin, developed a craving for it and ate some. When the husband was on the point of killing her, the child leapt out of the belly with a bit in its mouth and a bit in its hand crying, 'Not mother, but I'. From that day Maria and Muria have eaten beef.

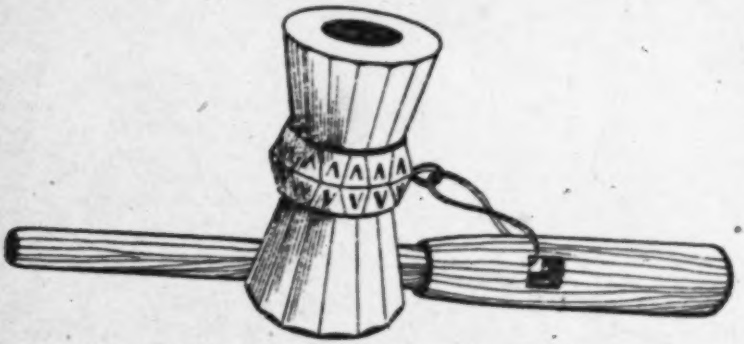

FIG. 6. Uspal used for pounding tobacco or haldi
Length 1' 9"

The Muria take their regular meals, when they are at home, three times a day. At about 10 in the morning they eat boiled rice and a few leaf-cups of jawa. Jawa is the Muria's staple food. It is made of rice, mandia grain, or any of the smaller millets, exactly as the Gond and Baiga of the Central Provinces make pej. Mandia-jawa, however, has its special methods of preparation. 'The mandia is ground into flour and soaked in water for two days. Rice or kodon is put to boil and when half-cooked the mandia flour is added, the pot filled up with water and rice and flour are cooked together. This preparation is called *ganji*. At about 3 in the afternoon the Muria has a few leaf-cups of stale jawa, and then at 8 in the evening he again has boiled rice, this time with pulse of various kinds.

At every meal, there is chutney of tamarind, mango or mahua; any roots or vegetables available are cooked with chilli, haldi or garlic; meat, fish or eggs may be added. These delicacies vary, of course, from day to day, but the main diet rarely changes.

The Muria's kitchen is the simplest place possible. A horseshoe hearth of earth is made in a corner on the ground; half-a-dozen different earthen pots are used; there may be a wooden spoon and certainly some gourd ladles. Without increasing the cost, the standard of the cookery could be enormously improved; it has always astonished me no one has tried to improve village cookery in India.

When there is a feast, or at a marriage, most of the cooking is done out of doors and by the chelik. Long narrow trenches are dug in the ground, filled

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

252 with wood and fired; pots are placed in rows upon them. The motiari husk and clean the rice, and make the leaf-cups and plates, but the boys do the actual cooking. When the rice is ready it is tipped out in a great pile on bamboo mats. A pig, which is killed by being beaten on the head with a rice husker, is roasted in the fire till its hair is burnt off; it is skinned and cleaned. Flesh, bones and skin are cut up into little squares of equal size—an important matter, for it is essential that everyone should receive exactly the same amount. These pieces are fried in mahua oil, and put into large earthen pots with rice-water, salt, haldi and chilli and boiled till ready. Fish is prepared in much the same way, except that usually something sour is added to flavour it. Fowls are cooked in leaf-cups. The intestines are squeezed out, and the whole chicken with head and feet is roasted with a little salt. Eggs are wrapped in leaves and baked in the fire. Mongoose flesh is roasted and spiced with dried mangoes. Crocodile is boiled.

264 At the ghotul feasts and marriages I have attended everyone sits round in a big circle, and the boys (sometimes assisted by a few motiari) serve the food. The bits of meat are carefully counted out into leaf-cups and distributed. Rice is served from baskets or winnowing-fans direct onto leaf-plates.

At home, the family sits round the pot of jawa, which is taken straight off the fire and placed in the middle of the floor. Each has a little chutney on a leaf in front of him and an empty leaf-cup. The mother dips a gourd into the pot and helps the little children; then each member of the family helps himself. There is no idea that men should eat before women or elders before the children.

262 Doctors say that the Muria's food lacks fat and protein and criticize them for not taking more milk, ghee and vegetable. No doubt the Muria, like other 146 people, would eat more of these things if they could get them But there is no doubt that they do not like milk, and rarely take it themselves or give it to their children.

731 Famine is not common in Bastar, for the people can fall back on the almost limitless products of the forests. But it has been known, and a sombre song preserves its memory.

539

Nimâre weke dântona rawnâni	Vulture, whither away, vulture?
Dori bhumi dântona dâda le	I am going towards the west, brother,
Bhumi dukhr dukhr roy dâda le	For the day of want has dawned.
Bhumi te dukhr arit roy dâda le	The famine is over all the world
Hikli huro bhaiso roy dâda le	Black, black are the buffaloes,
Sarpane bhaiso arit roy dâda le	And all of them have died, brother.
Podor pungâr doyo roy dâda le	White as cotton flowers are the cows,
Sarpane doyo artu roy dâda le	And all of them have fallen in summer.
Puhle dhelât rawnâl roy dâda le	On the broken clod the vulture,
Watle marâte kawrâl roy dâda le	On the withered tree the crow,
Kawar wohar insta roy dâda le	The crow is cawing, brother.
Raiyaka royon kawrâl roy dâda le	It is ready to fly down.

VI. Honey

222 Honey was discovered by a Maria named Waddai who also gave his name to
539 the whole succession of Waddai diviners. 'Waddai went one day to a medium, with a gift of char nuts, seeking help for his sick son. On the way he met a monkey which had been outcasted for falling while jumping from a tree and

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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oil for anointing the bride and bridegroom in marriage and 252 [302]
for the hair and body for toilet purposes is made from the mahua seed or indeed from any of the oils used in cooking.

The method of extracting oil from the mahua seed is as follows. A pot of water is placed on a fire near the oil-press and heated. Then into a bamboo cone, exactly like the *jib* in which rice-beer is prepared, is put the ground and dried seed. Covered with a small basket this is placed above the water-pot and the seed is steamed for about fifteen minutes. The steamed oil-seed is then tipped out into a small basket called *kora* and the operator presses it down with a rice-husker. When this small basket is full of closely pressed oil-seed, it is carried over to the press. This is called *gāramā*,[1] and is of a very primitive kind. A long forked branch is inserted into a hole made in a living tree about two feet above the ground. Underneath is placed the *gāraiota*, a block of wood with lines carved on its upper surface to carry off the oil. The basket of oil-seed is placed on top of this and the bough is laid upon it. The women place large stones on the forked end of the bough, thus forming a heavy weight to press down the seed. In the fork is a peg to keep it in position. After about half an hour the oil begins to flow and drips down into an earthen pot below.

This work is generally done by women, often by the motiari. In Masora I once saw two motiari extracting oil from the seeds of the keuti tree. These girls fetched the seed from the jungle, broke it up with their feet, ground it, steamed it and then put it into the press. They said that the chelik had no oil for their hair and they were doing this, entirely on their own, to please them.

VIII. Hunting

The Muria will eat almost anything. They profess to despise the Maria for eating monkeys and in Koilibera they still talk about the time when W. V. Grigson camped along the northern road near the Abujhmar and the Maria of the Barsur Pargana, who came to see him, left not a single monkey 262 [411]

Fig. 7. Characteristic Muria bow
Length 5′ 6″

in the hills and stripped the whole forest of ted anta. But near Jungani I saw a monkey's skin hanging up in a house and the people admitted that 'the children had eaten it'.[2] Crocodile is not disliked; after the skin is removed, the flesh, which is a little coarse, can yet be cooked and eaten

[1] This press resembles that reported as used in Assam and by the Korku.—K. P. Chattopadhyaya, 'Indian Oil Presses,' *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Institute*, Vol. I (1938), p. 43.

[2] Bison-horn Maria say that 'though its skin is black, the monkey's flesh is white as rice-beer'. They often roast the monkey in its skin and eat everything. If a man eats a monkey's placenta he will be as active as a monkey and able to jump from tree to tree. It is said that Kodaya Pedā's great-grandfather did this. The Waddai and Gaita of Dudkarka (and perhaps other villages) do not eat the flesh because the monkey helps them in their priestly duties—an obvious reference to Hanuman.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

in the ordinary way. Rats are a very popular item of diet and so are nearly all wild animals, though tiger-flesh is not usually taken.

The Muria, especially those living in the east of Kondagaon, where there is still a wonderful supply of game, have a good knowledge of the habits of animals and birds, both practical and fanciful. The tiger and bear appear frequently in folk-tales and songs. Of birds there are many stories. It is curious that the Muria attribute to such birds as the quail and the crane habits of jealousy which are strikingly absent from their own women. The female quail is believed to be possessed by the fear that her husband will be going to other women and is always calling *gudur gudur*. When she lays eggs, 'she makes him sit on them or he might go to other women forgetting his own children'. The female crane also calls her husband with the cry *taranh taranh tour tour*. When she lays her eggs in a hollow tree, 'in order to prevent him going after other women while she is hatching them, she makes him sit on them himself and closes the opening of the hollow with mud except for a

FIG. 8. Pellet-bow
Length 5'

little hole through which she feeds him'. The titur got its name and its cry when at a human marriage the Belosa in charge of all arrangements found she had lost her clitoris (*tila*). As she was looking for it, she met the bird and borrowed one from her. She promised to return it but never did so, and so now the bird is always saying '*Tila de*', 'Give me my clitoris'. The golden oriole's cry is imitated by the chelik as *pehing pude, pehing pude* or 'girl's vagina, girl's vagina' and motiari are said to get very embarrassed when they hear it. The gandachirai, or Greater Indian Night-jar, is supposed to call *tuk-tuk tuk tuk-tuk tuk* which resembles the noise *tukrus tukrus* of the Ganda's shuttle as he weaves his cloth. The chelik believe that if they can guess the name of the tree on which the bird is sitting, the thread will break. They call out the names of all the trees they can think of and when the bird falls silent they say they have guessed the right tree and the weaver's thread has snapped.

The Muria have ideas about the hare: it comes from the moon; it never drinks water, but only dew; in the rains it catches the falling water. If a man sees the hare in the moon move, he will get a fit. During the last famine, some Muria kept themselves alive on hare's turd, and even now they eat it, cooked into a soup, for it is considered nourishing and medicinal.

Before there was sun and moon it was by the peacock's cry that men knew the time, and still today the bird calls *Eh ho eh ho mane*, so that all who live in Nadumbhum (the Middle World) know that evening has come. When it cries in the dark, they know that dawn is breaking.

For hunting, the Muria's chief weapon is still the bow and arrow, though some of them have old guns which they regard with great reverence and often call by special names like Maoligundi.[1] Spears are used and pellet-bows,

[1] Old guns are worshipped by the Maharaja at the Dussera festival in Jagdalpur.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Mother Earth. The Gaita offered eggs and chickens, first making the chickens eat the rice and then killing them. The juice in the leaf-cups was offered to the Earth Mother and the Kanyang and then everyone drank a little. After this the owner was free to tap the tree in the ordinary way.

Failure of the sago-palm may be due either to black magic and witchcraft or to the hostility of one of the Gorga Kanyang. The Kanyang, if she is not happy in a particular village, may twist the branches at the top of the tree and cause them to wither. It is generally believed that the tree gives juice for three years 'just as a girl can enjoy herself for three years protected by Lingo in the ghotul. Then she marries and the juice ceases to flow. The motiari of the palm tree is afraid of marrying too soon. If we touch the tree with a cloth yellowed by haldi it will stop giving juice till the new shoots come, for the shadow of haldi (that is, of marriage) is upon it.'

For gonorrhoea, a very rare disaster among these aboriginals, the sufferer stands below holding a leaf-cup into which a friend pours a little of the juice from the top of the tree. The patient offers a few drops to the Gorga Kanyang and then drinks it without allowing it to touch the ground.

The wood of the palm is not usually used for building in Bastar but the Hill Maria make their *turam* drums out of its hollow dried-up trunk. The Muria also make combs and drum-sticks out of the dry wood. Some of the Muria in the Abujhmar foothills make necklaces of the fibre. The leaves are often used as hair-ornaments or to decorate the village dormitories. Sometimes the flowers are pounded into flour, mixed with water and drunk as a sort of gruel. When it is evident that the tree will give no more juice, it is cut down and the pith is removed. This is pounded into a sort of flour and steamed in the usual way into cakes which are popular eaten with honey or sugar. This practice is common across the whole of the sago-palm country. I have found it among Hill Maria, Bondo, Gadaba, and Juang and it has been recorded for the Kadir and Khasi.[1]

The salphi juice is either brought back to the house and stored there until by fermentation it becomes much more intoxicating than in its fresh condition or it is drunk immediately at the foot of the tree. Little groups of people, generally men, go out to the trees, taking with them roasted crabs or frogs, little bits of chicken, various kinds of chutney, carefully wrapped in leaf-cups. The liquor is drunk from leaves, generally simply folded to make a sort of cup, and it is sometimes poured direct into the mouth. Many delightful hours are thus spent by the villagers out among the woods or on the hills.

When a tree is specially planted by seeds or cuttings it is very carefully tended. A fence of wood is built round it and it is watered regularly. Sometimes a tree is associated with the memory of a particular person. In Kanhargaon, a village in the Chota Dongar area, a Muria planted salphi and mango trees fifty years ago and they still preserve his memory. When the people go in the evening to drink the juice, they offer a few drops in the name of Tallur Muttai and Kadrengal to the sago-palm and a few drops in the name of the dead man who planted the trees to the mango, 'so that as we drink you can drink also'.

Generally speaking the tree belongs to the man in whose field or garden it is growing. Where the trees are out in the jungle, or standing in the common land of the village, disputes sometimes arise. The headman or the most influential priests generally claim these trees as their own, but there is also a

[1] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 176; P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1914), p. 52. See also Grigson, op. cit., p. 152.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

pandum	Festival.
penkarsana, karsār (deo kheini)	'The games of the gods' at the clan festivals.
pohchāni, bohorāni	Ceremony for removing evil from the village.
polhāna (jogāni)	The offering of first-fruits.
punāng tindāna (nāwa khāni)	New Eating Ceremony.
singoti, sela	The fringe of ears of grain tied over doors at festivals, especially Diwali.

Fire-making

hāhak	The 'hearth' of a fire-drill.
khanda	The saw. In Hindi this word means 'sword'.
khanda-achāna	Making fire by a saw.
nogho-kodiya, ate	The 'hearth' of a saw.
nur-achāna	Making fire by a drill.
nurkia	Fire made by a drill.
usmal	The drill.
wadur kia	Fire made in a hearth.

Food

alainj (chapora)	Red ants.
gāto	The ordinary **bhāt** or boiled rice.
gondka	'Crab's eyes' or **kekra ankhi**.
gorānj, gorra	**Mandia** (*eleusine coracana*).
guge (batar kira)	Edible flying ants.
hāring	The ordinary wheat-cake or chapatti.
harsum	**Sarson** oil-seed, the profitable crop *sinapis alba rape*.
hind porak (chhind kira)	Edible grubs living in the *phoenix sylvestris* palm.
jandrān	**Jondra** maize (*zea mays*).
jata	Beans (*dolichos lablab*).
jāwa	A gruel, called elsewhere **pej**, the staple food of the aboriginals of central India, made of rice or millet.
kāng, ārk	*Setaria italica*. Also called **kollya lengri**.
kohola, kosra (Ha)	These are words applied rather widely to the small millets beloved of the aboriginals. **Kosra** applies most particularly perhaps to **kutki**, *panicum miliaceum*. Other popular small grains are— **mai kohola** or **bara kosra** **turo kohola** **os kosra** **mach** or **hudala kosra** **koda** (*paspalum scrobiculatum*) **rende, hamu, gatka** or **sawa** (*panicum frumentaceum*) **ragda, dusa, kapni**, wild rice. **chikma** or **turiya kohola** (*panicum miliare*).
kore (harwa)	The pulse *glycine hispida*.
kotum kukh	A mushroom (*kukh* is an umbrella). The Muria distinguish several varieties, such as the **bodāng**, the **pud-kukh** which grows on an ant-hill, the

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	mundur-kukh which appears at Dassera time, and the **hichra-kukh**, a small fungus generally growing on an ant-hill.
kusir	**Sāg** or curry.
māti	Roots. A great many of these are eaten; common among them are the **kāndul māti** or sweet potato, the **hind māti** or root of the *phoenix sylvestris*, the **bhurka** or **bhaina deti māti.**
nuka	Husked rice.
nung	Oil from the seed of *til, sesamum indicum.*
pande, panne	Frog.
pesel (mung)	The pulse *phaseolus mungo.*
pupul (urad)	The pulse *phaseolus radiatus.*
rahar (arhar)	The pulse *cajanus indicus.*
toskār māt (tikur)	The wild arrowroot, *curcuma angustifolia.*
wark	Parched rice, also **wakuhāk** (GN) and **chiura** (H), the poor man's delicacy eaten between meals.
wanji	**Dhān** or rice.
yete	Crab.

Ghotul Buildings

bāndra	The fence round the ghotul enclosure.
dinda rāj (Ha)	'The kingdom of the Unmarried.'
ghotul	The village dormitory.
ghotul rascha (khor duār)	The dancing ground.
kirki bukān (kāna polka, bhulka)	Holes in the walls for storing tobacco and small possessions.
kodasār	The stable.
kupāhi ghotul	The outer room of the dormitory.
kutul (pirha)	A wooden pillow.
mandak	The open shed in the ghotul court.
murwis harai (mongri deri)	The central pillar of the building.
nata harai (oona deri)	The side pillars.
parmāngkor ghotul	'The dormitory beautiful as a bison's horns.'
romi (akori)	A long bamboo with a catch on one end, used by chelik to pull down fruit and often kept in the ghotul.
sojāhi ghotul	The inner room.
walkor (akoos)	Wooden bracket for hanging drums.
wark bād (dāru mācha)	The wood stack.

Hair-dressing

bang-māhana (pāti)	Parting, either for boy or girl.
bechāng (tapra)	Boy's fringe.
julpia	The hair on either side of the parting.
kaigi khopa, kunjār	Method by which girls tie their hair in a bun.
kunjār balla	Wooden block under the hair kept in place by wooden hair pins.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

substantial and carefully tended buildings. Fowls, set in funnel-shaped bamboo stands, share the house with the human beings.

II

The Maria's main source of livelihood is agriculture. The ancient and traditional method is axe-cultivation, whereby the people make clearings in the forest with their axes, allow the felled wood to dry, fire it shortly before the rains and then sow the seed in the ashes. Sometimes this is done in the very place where the trees are cut. Sometimes brush-wood is carried to a regular field and spread upon its surface. The Maria, living as they do in settled and often level country, have also many permanent fields which are embanked and irrigated by artificial tanks. The Maria are very proud of these tanks, and they are a frequent cause of dispute which sometimes leads to murder. A great part of the Maria's life is necessarily spent in these fields and clearings, and little field-huts and platforms are erected in which whole families camp for weeks at a time watching the crops at night and cooking and doing their work by day. Everybody helps in the work. Beside the family there may be farm-hands, some of a special kind such as the Lamhada, who serves for his wife instead of paying the bride-price, and the Kabari who is a bond-servant working to repay a loan.[1]

Besides agriculture, the Maria eagerly and successfully exploit the produce of the great forests in which they live. There is nothing edible that they will not eat, fruits, roots, tubers, leaves—they have a profound knowledge of the possibilities of natural produce. They are equally omnivorous in their attitude to meat. In the villages they keep pigs, goats and fowls, and they are fond of pigeons. They still (though they often deny it to outsiders) eat beef on all important and ceremonial occasions. Rats, squirrels and small birds are caught by the children and roasted and eaten with delight.

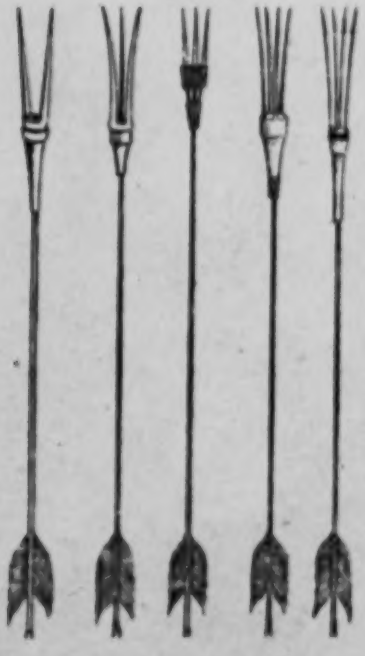
[1] The Kabari system, which is similar to what is called Bhagela in Hyderabad, Kamiauti in Bihar, and Gothi in Orissa and Madras, is open to grave abuses—men working a whole life-time to settle a debt which is not settled even by death, but descends to the sons—and is now controlled by the State.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

224 The older people are keen hunters and trappers, though much of the game has disappeared. Simple thorn-traps are placed round the mahua trees to catch bats, and more substantial snares are set for birds, hares and larger animals. Before the great Seed Festival at the end of the hot weather, there [796 is a ceremonial hunt at which bows and arrows are worshipped 787] and all the able-bodied men go out to get what game they can, their success or otherwise being regarded as an omen for the coming harvest.

226 The Maria fish with nets and traps, by baling out water 262 from pools or by poisoning the streams. Small fish, prawns, crabs and frogs are very popular roasted with spices and taken with the refreshing juice of the toddy or sago palms.

411 The tools and weapons of the Maria naturally figure frequently in their acts of violence. The most common implement of murder is the ordinary *godel* axe which corresponds to the *tangia* in universal use throughout central India. The Maria also use, chiefly for ceremonial purposes, a *pharsi* battle-axe with a crescent blade.



Engram arrows
(*Length about 3'*)

The *banda* or *gagra* is the Maria dao. The *banda* is a large knife with a broad end and rather a short handle used to cut bamboos and young trees. The *gagra* has a much longer handle and sometimes a point and a curved blade. It is not only very useful in the forest; it is a powerful weapon of assault. No spears feature in any of the murders described

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

slipped up it. Between his feet is tied another rope which holds them against the tree. He is thus able to get up the tree like a humping caterpillar. A Maria told me that in the evening the people go up the trees 'like a company of monkeys'. When villagers go to drink sago or toddy, they often take with them little leaf-bundles containing dry fish, roasted crabs, red ants or mahua paste.

It is impossible to say how much alcohol is drunk by the Maria. According to the Excise figures in the Dantewara Tahsil and Sukma Zamindari where the population is overwhelmingly Maria, the consumption per 100 in proof gallons is 46.48 and 50.51 respectively. In the Muria Tahsil to the north it is 32.43 in Kondagaon and 58.90 in Narayanpur. Narayanpur, it must be remembered, has a large population of Hill Maria who do not drink rice-beer which may explain why there is a higher consumption of mahua spirit. In the Bison-horn Maria area, there are —according to the Settlement records—about 75,000 toddy trees. The number of sago palms is not known, but is—I believe—considerably smaller.

Mahukum ropes for climbing toddy trees

Illicit distillation was a feature of two at least of the murders. In the last five years 143 cases were detected in the Dantewara Tahsil, 91 in Bijapur, 65 in Jagdalpur as against only 11 in Kondagaon and 18 in Narayanpur. This certainly suggests that the Bison-horn Maria are much more given to illicit distillation than their brethren of the north. But, of course, these figures may only reflect greater energy